

VZCZCXRO8474
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #0442/01 1271058
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 071058Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2164
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3064
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1360
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3406
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2792
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000442

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: INTERETHNIC HOSTILITIES AGAINST KURDS
ERUPT

BISHKEK 00000442 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The alleged rape of a 4-year-old girl sparked a riot, pitting ethnic Russians and Kyrgyz against ethnic Kurds, in the northern Kyrgyz village of Petrovka April 26. The melee quickly attracted the attention of President Bakiyev and other officials, who traded charges with opposition politicians, before dismissing local officials for apparent inaction over the rape case. Three criminal cases have since been opened. Petrovka villagers petitioned the Russian Ambassador for assistance, and he told the Ambassador that he intervened to prevent ethnic Russians becoming involved in politicized unrest. However, he is concerned that corrupt local authorities are still not doing their jobs, protecting the rapist and instead railroading an innocent man. Kyrgyz authorities will face difficulties resolving long-simmering tensions towards the ethnic Kurds, and their handling of the case may provide opposition politicians an example of the current administration's inability to maintain peace and security. End Summary.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PETROVKA?

12. (SBU) On April 26, a crowd of up to 300 ethnic Kyrgyz and Russian villagers protested the presence of ethnic Kurds in the village of Petrovka, smashing the windows of fifteen Kurdish residences and overturning or setting ablaze six vehicles. The alleged April 7 rape of a 4-year-old ethnic Russian girl by a 22-year-old ethnic Kurd and the local authorities' subsequent inaction sparked the riot. Some minor injuries were reported. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) sent anti-riot troops to quell the disorder, but after several hours the crowds reappeared and over 80 protesters were detained. Authorities released everyone except representatives of the United People's Movement (UPM) and Green Party, who were charged with inciting mass disorder. The girl's grandmother, who demanded justice from the police and reportedly received death threats, was found

hanged on April 19.

THE BLAME GAME

13. (SBU) As the dust settled, the finger pointing began. Residents of Petrovka, a small village located approximately 45 kilometers from Bishkek, blamed Kurds for causing numerous problems in their village. A prominent human rights activist told the Embassy that Kurdish teenagers had beaten up ethnic Russian and Kyrgyz boys and that several years ago there was a similar case involving a 3-year-old girl. Internal Affairs Minister Moldomusa Kongantiyev pinned the blame on opposition politicians, claiming that Saparbek Argymbayev of the UPM had addressed the crowds and "fomented inter-ethnic hatred." The opposition, in turn, labeled Kongantiyev's charges lies, and demanded an apology along with his dismissal. Social Democrat Bakyt Beshimov charged the administration with failure to "address critical social issues." President Bakiyev, who met with Kongantiyev and Prosecutor General Elmurza Satybaldiyev after the incident, blamed the inaction of the local authorities for the ensuing chaos.

CRIMINAL CASES OPENED

14. (SBU) The Embassy has learned of three criminal investigations arising out of the Petrovka melee. The first investigation addresses the rape case. A second investigation pertains to the grandmother's death, which originally was deemed a suicide. However, her exhumed body revealed a broken nose and other blunt trauma. A third investigation focuses on abuse of power, forgery of

BISHKEK 00000442 002.2 OF 002

documents, and inactivity of local MVD officers. (Note: President Bakiyev dismissed three local officials following the riot. End note.) NGOs have been reportedly providing legal, medical, and psychological assistance to the rape victim and her mother.

KURDS DEMANDING REFUGEE STATUS

15. (SBU) Media subsequently reported that ethnic Kyrgyz and Russian citizens demanded that 50 (out of 110) Kurdish families be expelled from Petrovka. Five families that fled to another town have since apparently encountered harassment there. During an April 30 news conference, Ramazan Seidov, Chairman of the Association of Kurds, demanded that the expelled families be given refugee status. He also claimed that Kurds in the village of Kaima were also under attack.

THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR GETS INVOLVED

16. (C) Russian Ambassador Valentin Vlasov told the Ambassador April 30 that following the alleged rape, a group of Petrovka villagers petitioned him to intervene with local authorities. The villagers told Vlasov that the Kurds had been "terrorizing" the village for months, and intimidated to him that the local authorities had been bribed into inaction. Vlasov said his outreach to local authorities yielded no results, and commented that the subsequent riot was "understandable" given the authorities' "blatant corruption and inaction -- because the Kurds paid them all off." Moreover, he claimed that even now local authorities collared the wrong Kurd for the crime, explaining that the real culprit was a well-connected Kurd. When the Ambassador asked why Vlasov was so engaged in a domestic matter, he explained that he wanted to prevent ethnic Russians becoming involved in politicized unrest.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) According to multiple sources, the ethnic tension between villagers in Petrovka and their Kurdish neighbors had threatened to boil over for several years. Local observers anticipate further interethnic clashes and warned that the rape case was merely the final spark that set the protesters ablaze. It is worth noting that there is little ethnic tension between Russians and Kyrgyz and that Kyrgyz villagers explained that when an ethnic Russian 4-year old had been raped, they felt it incumbent upon themselves to stand up for the Russians.

¶8. (C) Although the Bakiyev Administration was quick to blame and fire local government officials, how they can resolve the continuing conflict without dislocating families or favoring one side is not clear. Either way, the opposition may pounce on the opportunity to show the current Administration's inability to provide peace and stability to all Kyrgyz citizens, regardless of ethnicity.
GFOELLER